

**Arlington Redevelopment Board
September 21, 2015 Minutes
Town Hall Annex, Second Floor Conference Room, Town Hall – 7:00pm**

Approved: October 19, 2015

This meeting was recorded by ACMi.

PRESENT: Chair, Andrew Bunnell, Mike Cayer, Bruce Fitzsimmons, Andy West

ABSENT:

STAFF: Carol Kowalski, Laura Wiener

Documents Used:

Environmental Design Review Special Permit Application for 19 Massachusetts Avenue

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7:00pm and stated that ACMi was recording the meeting. The Chairman turned to the agenda item of the Environmental Design Review Special Permit Amendment for 19 Massachusetts Avenue.

Mary Winstanley O'Connor introduced herself to the Board, along with Ned Carney from Claremont Association. Ms. O'Connor summarized the original special permit issued by the Redevelopment Board, and the desired addition of 21 rooms to be added to the current hotel. Ms. O'Connor added that their application will need some parking relief, but detailed that the hotel fitness center and restaurant are for hotel patrons only. The hotel has studied parking use and determined that there has never been a time in the past year where the hotel was at 100% capacity and needed more parking spaces. Ms. O'Connor stated that the hotel would like to use a valet service to facilitate stacked parking. Ms. O'Connor described the Conservation Commission conditions, including the new plantings. She added that two catch basins will be installed as storm water treatment, along with a garage catch basin. Neighbors expressed interest in having the hotel maintain the Town park behind the sidewalk between Route 16, and the hotel is willing to do that.

The Chairman opened the floor to public comment. Russell Bartash, 21 Cottage Ave, commented that he was concerned about the two dumpsters on the abutting property where activity is going on that shouldn't be. Also, the pine trees don't screen the lot well enough. Mr. Fitzsimmons asked what parking lot had the dumpsters on them. Mr. Bartash said he thought it was the lot with CVS. Mr. Fitzsimmons said the hotel is in separate ownership than the lot with CVS.

Ms. O'Connor added that the owner of Claremont would be okay agreeing to a deed restriction, so that the hotel's restaurant would not become a public restaurant. Ms. O'Connor added that she believed this addition fit in well with the Arlington Master Plan.

Fred Keeler of H.W. Moore Associates introduced himself as the project's civil engineers. He explained the proposed addition according to the plan set provided to the Board. Mr. Keeler explained how the Conservation Commission required compensating for the removal of the six trees on site. He also described the items on the plan that addresses storm water management including roof drainage and underground drainage. All items were reviewed by Wayne Chouinard, Director of Engineering.

Matt Worth of ProCon, described the architectural plans, and mentioned that they are not excavating or manipulating the existing grade. Mr. Keeler then reviewed the parking plan, showing the tandem spaces perpendicularly. These spaces would be managed by attendants.

Ms. Wiener asked for details on when the valet parking would be triggered, and if there is enough staff to assist with these needs. Mr. Cayer agreed and asked for clarification as well. Mr. Carney responded that when 80% occupancy was reached, that would trigger valet parking. Mr. Petrugious added that their reservation system can tell them well in advance when they are nearing 80% capacity and the hotel can react quickly to the needs of valet parking.

Mr. Cayer asked how the parking audit was done. Mr. Carney explained how the hotel gathered their parking information through a physical count at 11:00pm.

Mr. Cayer asked about the parking statistics for June. He stated was hesitant to agree to “ad hoc” valet. Mr. Petrugious added that guest satisfaction is very important to them, and during the busiest months of the year, they need to stay on top of valet parking in order to keep their guests returning for another visit.

Mr. Fitzsimmons asked where a guest would drive up and meet somebody with a car, during a valet period. Mr. Petrugious said there was a section in front of the hotel to unload bags and drop people off, which could be used for valet. The valet attendant would either be by the front door, or stationed in the garage to meet the guest as they pulled into the garage area.

Mr. Fitzsimmons said the parking aisle needs to be 24’, but their parking aisle with the tandem spaces is only 16’. Ms. O’Connor said they could make an exception under 8.12.C that allows conditions to be modified to increase capacity if the following conditions are met. Mr. Fitzsimmons said that in 8.12.A.10 allows a reduction in spaces, not dimension.

Mr. Cayer said he still did not understand how the monitoring of valet parking is going to work for some guests. Mr. Bunnell asked if it would make sense to have valet parking on all the time. Mr. Petrugious said not from an operating standpoint because even at full capacity they only ran about 78% full in the parking lot.

Mr. West cited benefits of the proposal, and added that the hotel has incentive to manage the hotel parking as best as they possibly can. Mr. Cayer restated his concern over guests going into the CVS, and gym parking lot.

Ms. O’Connor recommended a different valet trigger for summer than winter months.

Mr. Fitzsimmons asked if there was signage to notify guests of parking restrictions. Mr. Carney confirmed. Mr. Fitzsimmons said the bylaw allows some flexibility to 80% but the Board cannot reduce it further. Mr. West stated that if they can increase parking in their lot, they are doing a positive thing for the Town. They become more efficient in parking and benefit parking conditions.

Ms. O’Connor reviewed the special permit reference to valet parking. She said she talked to Michael Byrne, Director of Inspectional Services, about stacked parking and he thought it was possible. She did not discuss valet parking with him.

The Board discussed enforcement of the valet parking. Ms. Kowalski added that the other businesses are self-policing and she believes they would continue to do so. Ms. O’Connor pointed out that additional signs can be added to enforce proper use of the parking area.

Mr. Cayer asked about the previous swimming pool and basketball court. Ms. O’Connor explained the past use and development of the hotel amenities.

Mr. Fitzsimmons asked about the bicycle parking, stating that they will need 7 bicycle spaces on site. The owners confirmed that they will find the space for all required bicycle spaces.

Mr. Bartash asked if there was contact information for the construction team just in case any issues came up. Mr. Carney said he could provide that information but they would not be doing any work at night.

Ms. O’Connor suggested conditions and methods for signage to inform guests to park on the hotel property only.

Mr. Fitzsimmons moved to approve the plans as presented, date stamped September 15, 2015 to amend EDR docket # 3035, subject to the general conditions that appear with all special permits, and the following special conditions:

1. Valet parking will be employed when hotel occupancy is at 70% in April, May, and June. During all other months 80% occupancy will trigger valet parking.
2. When valet parking is in effect, no guest will be allowed to self-park.

3. The tandem parking spaces shown on plan prepared by HW Moore Associates, Inc., may only be used when valet parking is in effect.
4. Applicant will provide Board with parking management plan, including use of valet parking and signs indicating that all hotel guests must park on hotel property or risk being towed.
5. There shall be no public use of the hotel amenities, such as the Board room or restaurant. All common areas shall be for use of hotel guests only.
6. Three (3) additional bicycle spaces will be provided for a total of seven (7) bicycle spaces within the garage.

Mr. Cayer seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Bunnell turned to the next agenda item of designating a member of the ARB to serve on the Community Preservation Ac Committee. Mr. Cayer volunteered. Mr. West moved to designate Mr. Cayer as ARB member to serve on the CPA Committee. Mr. Fitzsimmons seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Bunnell turned to the agenda item of designating a member of the ARB to serve on the Master Plan Implementation Committee. Mr. Bunnell volunteered. Mr. Cayer moved to designate Mr. Bunnell as ARB member to serve on the Master Plan Implementation Committee, with Mr. West as the alternate. Mr. Fitzsimmons seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Cayer moved to approve Joe Barr and Wendy Richter as the ARB appointees to the Master Plan Implementation Committee. Mr. Fitzsimmons seconded. All voted in favor.

Ms. Kowalski turned to the agenda item relating to electronic meeting packets viewed on tablets for the Redevelopment Board in the future. This works towards having applicants submit plans electronically in the future. It should reduce paper and make it easier to keep a searchable database of EDR decisions and plans.

Mr. Cayer mentioned it would be challenging to take notes on plans with this method. Mr. Fitzsimmons mentioned the importance of plans being visible from such a small screen. Paper plans would still need to be provided. Ms. Kowalski said a full roll set would still be required for the meeting, and possibly projecting plans on a screen. Ms. Kowalski mentioned that a budget request has been submitted for the Board to receive tablets from the Town.

Ms. Kowalski moved to the next item of a possible Zoning Bylaw amendment for a possible fall town meeting. It looks at land uses that have been there for a long time and need to be legitimized in the Zoning Bylaw. The first item is for private recreation. It looks at land owned by Winchester Country Club and the Belmont Country Club and the Arlington Catholic Playing Field. It makes those uses allowed by right. These properties are in Chapter 61B, which allows property owners whose land use is in forestry or private recreation to allow them to apply for a reduced tax designation. The second item would be Cemetery Conservation Districts to acknowledge natural resources and historic resources that about the cemeteries in Arlington. This makes the cemetery use by right where there are already cemeteries. Currently the cemeteries are in R1, yet there will never be single family homes in cemeteries. This would rezone them correctly. The last item would be an institutional non-profit district, which would allow these nonprofit institutions such as churches, or non-profit schools to be rezoned to remove them from residential, commercial, or industrial. These changes do not change their current use; it reinforces their current use by creating a new district.

The Board provided input on the suggested zoning changes. Mr. Fitzsimmons pointed out that churches can go anywhere, so he is unsure why they need their own district, unless the point is to keep all other zoning out. It might be a problem if the area cannot be repurposed if a church needs to close at some point. Ms. Kowalski mentioned that Mr. Byrne pointed out that at any point, the Town can rezone. If a location needed to sell a property, the Town might reconsider what the area should be rezoned as and would be consistent with the Master Plan. Mr. Cayer added that he thinks the Board should see how people feel about this prior to bringing these forward to Town Meeting.

Mr. Fitzsimmons asked if there was a municipal and school use district. Ms. Kowalski said no because municipal uses can go anywhere in town, but it is consistent with this rezoning concept.

John Warden asked if this had any effect on the computation under 40B. Ms. Kowalski said that if the zoning was changed on a parcel and it wasn't allowed in residential, commercial, or industrial it would not be considered buildable.

Mr. Worden said reaching that 1.5% is a target that Arlington needs to keep an eye on anytime you are changing the zoning map. The Board said they understand and agreed.

Ms. Kowalski and Ms. Wiener presented the implementation steps from the Master Plan, in particular about zoning, for the Board to present to Town Meeting in the spring. This includes mixed use, parking, residential development, and other zoning changes that are more near-term goals. Ms. Kowalski summarized the details of each of these items.

Mr. Cayer said mixed use needs to be discussed in the scope of the whole Zoning Bylaw, not just in a small scale as it previously was discussed. Ms. Kowalski said the design guidelines should be helpful with this topic, even though they are not a complete solution.

Mr. Fitzsimmons recommended looking at the last time mixed zoning was discussed at Town Meeting, to review the feedback that was received.

Mr. Cayer spoke on the topic of re-codifying the Bylaw. If this step is skipped, it makes it harder to edit the Bylaw because nothing gets simplified. The Board and Ms. Kowalski discussed the benefits or drawbacks of potential re-codification.

Mr. Worden said he participated in the re-codification of 1975. The moratorium helped the Town in this process because it took the pressure off. Mr. Worden said something needs to happen now. The big issue is the residential issue, the devastation being brought in every neighborhood by the developers putting in huge houses. By removing the phrase "on the same footprint" out of the Bylaw, it would help with this issue.

Mr. Cayer said the key would be the involvement of the Master Plan Implementation Committee.

Ms. Kowalski turned to the agenda item of the Work Tracking Update. Ms. Kowalski updated the Board on the appointment statuses of various committees. The Board needs to name a liaison to the Open Space Committee, which Ms. Kowalski is working on. Ms. Kowalski updated the Board on the Housing Corporation of Arlington's lease which will expire on June 30, 2016. A feasibility study will begin shortly to advise the Town on the best use of space in the Senior Center. The Town Manager's office is going to issue a contract soon for Sterling Architects to complete the feasibility study. The Commonwealth has not yet confirmed if the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Services will remain in the Senior Center. Site paving at the Senior Center is being developed into bid specifications, and the next step will be working with the landscape architect. The entrance at the Senior Center is also going to be worked on in the near future where the steps need to be repaired. Work will begin on 23 Maple Street to restore the porches at this location. The Jefferson Cutter House work will be completed by June 30, 2016.

The Board turned to the approval of the meeting minutes from August 17, 2015. Mr. Cayer moved to approve the minutes from August 17, 2105. Mr. West seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Bunnell thanked Ms. Kowalski for her assistance to the Board. Mr. Cayer moved to adjourn. Mr. Fitzsimmons seconded. All voted in favor.